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ABSTRACT

"Doodlefunking" is a useful method for motivating students to produce creative language products: "doodle" suggests aimless drawing directed by the unconscious while the conscious is attending to other matters, and "funking" connotes moving into a mental state in which the conscious mind is shut off while the unconscious mind is turned on. In doodlefunking, the student (or doodlefunker) creates two lists side by side on a blank sheet of paper. One is a list of common, everyday chores or problems, and the other is a list of sensual events (physical acts, sights, smells, or some combination of senses). Next, the students let their minds wander aimlessly between the two lists until a connection occurs, associating something on one list with something on the other list. The result will be a sentence that makes sense, for example: "Paying the monthly bills is like eating eight persimmons one after the other." The sentence produced is a simile that contains a bit of personal truth for the creator. (A list of student doodlefunks is attached, as well as doodlefunks which do not work well.) (MM)

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DOODLEFUNKING

Jerry Fishman

For several years, I have been trying to tap into students' ability to be creative, to generate some language product that is not only delightful to the teacher but is actually exciting to them as well. I have found that when this happens motivational and attitudinal changes occur in the students. In other words, the act of producing a language product that is pleasurable makes the student feel that classroom work is in part worthwhile, meaningful and even a source of excitement. I have noticed that this feeling has acted as a spur or type of motivation that has been carried over into less creative areas such as writing essays or finding out what an author is saying in an essay.

Doodlefunking Opens the Door.

The best method I have invented for teaching students to produce creative language products is doodlefunking. Odd as the name is at first glance, I think it is not only a creative but an appropriate name. "Doodle" suggesting aimless drawing directed by the unconscious while the conscious is busy attending to matters of importance fits the process. And "funking" suggesting moving into a mental state in which the conscious mind is shut off while the unconscious mind is turned on (blue funk, brown study, noodling, spaced out, gone, out in the ozone, etc.) also fits. I have presented this method to an audience of community college, college and university teachers while serving as a panelist on community college critical thinking issues at the 1985 annual convention of the American Philosophical Association in San Francisco. And recently I demonstrated doodlefunking and presented two other techniques in a presentation at the 1987 annual convention of the Western College Reading and Learning Association in Albuquerque.

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How Doodlefunking Works

In doodlefunking, the doodlefunker creates two lists side by side on a blank sheet of paper. One is a list of common, ordinary, everyday chores or problems or difficulties or irksome events (on the left side of the page). One is a list of sensual events: physical acts or sights or smells or tastes or hot and cold or tactile experiences or some combinations of these elements (on the right side of the page). I usually give this sample of the two lists.

Doing chores.	Feeling the hot sun while lying on the beach.
Getting to the bank.	Cobwebs.
Paying bills.	Worms.
Finding true or loyal friends.	The smell of mown grass.
Trying not to get involved with the wrong people.	The feel of an electric blanket.
Falling in love.	A cold, cold shower.
Finding meaningful sex.	Eating a persimmon.
Passing courses in college while leading a fairly normal social life.	Biting into a strawberry.
Understanding politics.	Being out in a boat on a clam, calm morning.
Living on a fixed income.	Watching meteors flash in the night.
	Hearing a waterfall in the distance.

Now the doodlefunking process begins. To doodlefunk is to look at your two lists side by side and to let your mind ooze and slide over the words in the lists WITHOUT trying to do anything at all. You let the words mumble in your mind over and over. You wander over the lists aimlessly and slowly, seeing the words, repeating them silently in your mind. But you remain passive; you do not attempt to steer the boat or control things or do

something or make something. Thee must not interfere. There is an assignment here, but the assignment is to soak in the words and let your unconscious take over.

Sooner or later this doodlefunking will produce a connection, a flash, a synapse. You will find yourself connecting something in one list with something in the other list. The result will be a sentence that makes sense. Here is one example (an actual student doodlefunk).

PAYING THE MONTHLY BILLS IS LIKE EATING EIGHT PERSIMMONS ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

Look at what happened to you. You created two lists (problems and sensual experiences) and you sat there brooding over these lists until your mind joined an item in one list with an item in the other list. What you produced was a statement (simile) that contains a bit of personal truth for you, or you might see it as an aphorism.

Details of the Doodlefunking Process

Most students will create two or three doodlefunks in one doodlefunking session: one or two students in each class (developmental or college level) will produce four to ten or more doodlefunks. I walk around the room while the doodlefunking process is going on making sure the meditative or noodling process is really going on as opposed to some conscious process of picking an item in one list and consciously joining it to some item in the other list. I have found that it takes a particular degree of courage to discuss something called "doodlefunking" and that a few minutes of explanation are needed to show that the mind can creatively (a la right brain activating) do things, so to speak, by itself. This explanation is used to show that the mind can speak, by itself. This explanation is used to show that the mind can spontaneously join an item in one list with an item in the other list in a sentence that makes sense. I discuss this

spontaneous or automatic function of the mind by talking about running down a hilly path at a fair degree of speed (having done this myself). I have run downhill in the conscious mode--looking to see where I plant my feet to avoid roots and rocks. I have also run downhill in the unconscious mode (on automatic pilot or in a blue funk). In that case, I just go like a blur. I do not pick out where my feet will step. I just somehow fly down the hill intuitively, and my feet step over and around rocks and roots.

The whole doodlefunking process can be carried out in fifty minutes. It needs to be done as a single, uninterrupted event. If it was to be carried over to a second class meeting, too much conscious reflection would have gone on in the interval between classes, and the result would be something that was not spontaneous. The exercise would then be ruined. When I doodlefunk with a fifty minute class, I talk for about three minutes about the mysterious nature of the creative part of the mind/brain, about doodlefunking and the aptness of the name, about operating on automatic pilot either when running downhill or when running one's mind over two lists. Then I give out my doodlefunking handout containing a short discussion of doodlefunking, two lists, a sample doodlefunk. I give them (three minutes) to glance at the handout, and then I say, "Doodlefunk."

From then on, I withdraw nearly all of my teacherly energy and become hardly a presence in the room. I just wait, and then after fifteen minutes or so, I meander around the class, visiting each student at least twice (this works best with no more than twenty students). I look at what each student is doing and try to make sure that he or she grasps the process. After twenty-five minutes, I will interrupt for no more than one minute at a time with conversations about what goes on in the mind when one doodlefunks. I will also interrupt to read several creative doodlefunks to encourage the class and to illustrate what doodlefunking can produce. Near the end of the class, I will take a minute to read a few more doodlefunds and to talk about

the fact that not being able to have the doodlefunk experience under classroom conditions or within the fifty minute time period is no sign of abnormality.

Looking to the Future

I am quite pleased with the motivational and attitudinal changes brought about in about half of the students in each class in which I have introduced doodlefunking (sixteen classes in the last three years). Now I would like to devise a means of determining if the changes in motivation and attituce do affect reading and writing and thinking skills in developmental and college level classes. I need to create an experiment in which I compare students, say in two developmental classes, one class having several doodlefunking exercises during the semester (up to now, I have used one doodlefunk session a semester in each class) and the other not having doodlefunking at all. That is my next step in exploring the doodlefunking process.

APPENDIX A EXAMPLES OF STUDENT DOODLEFUNKS PICKED AT RANDOM

Doing too many drugs is like sliding down a waterslide that never ends.

Being in love is like watching the sun rise over Chicago from O'Hare Airport.

Being told I'm fat is like having my back rubbed with sandpaper.

Visiting my neurologist is like being attacked by hordes of mosquitos.

Trying to satisfy your husband can feel like you're being held underwater until you think you're going to drown.

Talking with my uncle is like taking a nap under a trée.

To read a new book is like walking through my brain.

Having money problems is like sitting in a hot tub and having the jets pounding away at you until you're too weak to move.

Dealing with banktellers is like taking a strawberry scented bath.

Taking exams is like peering over the top of a cliff on a very windy day.

Dealing with parents is like trying to swallow a fishbone.

Doodlefunking is like walking in the rain on a warm night.

Loving my husband is like driving a patrol car lights and sirens. [sic]

Doing homework reminds me of the taste of sour lemonade.

Dieting is like watching a funny comedian and not being able to laugh.

Trying to find God and understand His purpose is like trying to converse with the dentist when he has his hands in my mouth.

Getting along with my boyfriend's family is like breaking in a pair of stiff, new shoes.

A boring lecture is like listening to a watch ticking.

Being in debt is the same as sitting on a block of ice.

Doing homework is like watching a snail walk.

Thinking of different ideas is like being stuck in a junkyard with no way out.

Being a housewife is like eating unflavored jello every day for the rest of your life.

Denying anger is like walking through a field of California poppies blindfolded, never breathing the air, never feeling the breeze.

Trying to understand politics is like hearing a waterfall in the distance and finding out the source is a sewer pipe.

To me, solving a math problem is like seeing the rainbow after the storm.

APPENDIX B STUDENT DOODLEFUNKS

THAT DON'T WORK WELL

Going to school is like being lost in a forest. You wonder if you'll ever get out.

"You wonder if you'll ever get out" is commentary. It is not needed. The doodlefunk, an acceptable if ordinary one, ends with the word "forest." The point is that the doodlefunk must speak for itself. The student needs to resist the urge to explain and explain and explain.

Foul language pollutes the air.

This is an opinion or a value judgment. It is not a doodlefunk. When I looked at the lists this student made, the sensual items were there, but she had not used a sensual item from her righthand list. Instead, she had taken "foul language in public" from her lefthand list and and turned it into an opinion. If this student had written, "Foul language in public is like a lawn that has been watered for too many hours," it would have been a fine doodlefunk.